



Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

December 2017

Topical Activity

Full of love



Traditionally, Quakers did not celebrate Christmas, believing that every day was sacred and as important as the next. Today, many Quakers do celebrate Christmas with their family and friends, but recognise and promote the relevance of love and peace throughout the entire year. All too often, especially at Christmas, the message of love and peace gets lost in an excess of gift buying and giving, over eating, and unnecessary extravagance. Jesus teaches us that true wealth is not having lots of money or 'things', but having a life full of love, joy, kindness, and generosity. Quakers believe in living simply. Share with the children the following from *Quaker faith & practice*:

'Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment.'

Qf&p1.02.41

Resources needed: A small box for each child – small confectioner's boxes work well as they often come in gold and can be easily folded. Alternatively, any small boxes that the children can decorate themselves. If you are going for the latter option you will need to allow more time and you will need art materials to decorate with, including scissors, glue, pens for writing messages, string, gift-tags and sellotape.

Speak with the children and find out what is important to them about Christmas. For some it may be spending time with family, Christmas traditions, or the birth of Jesus. For others it may be giving and receiving presents. Ask the children what they hope to give and/or receive as a gift this year. What is the greatest gift the children feel that they could give or be given?

Story

Once upon a time, there was a little girl whose parents worked very hard just to be able to feed and clothe their family. Just before Christmas when the little girl was five, she was told off by her parents for using up the only roll of wrapping paper that they had. The wrapping paper was gold and had been expensive to buy.

Because the parents did not have much money, they were even more upset when they realised that the little girl had used the entire roll of expensive gold paper to wrap just one gift. The wrapped present sat under the Christmas tree and her parents worried about where the girl had got the money to buy whatever was in the box.



On Christmas morning, the little girl, bursting with excitement, handed the gift to her parents, "Mummy and Daddy," she beamed, "this is for you."

As they opened the box, the parents felt bad for having overreacted to their little girl's use of the gold paper and regretted being cross with her.

But when the box was opened and they saw that it was empty, they became angry once again.

"You've wasted all of our paper on an empty box!" scolded the little girl's mother. "Do you not understand the concept of gifts?" shouted the father, his cheeks red with anger "When

you give someone a wrapped up present, there is supposed to be a gift inside the box”
The little girl looked up at her parents, tears rolling sadly down her cheeks. “But it’s not empty,” She whispered “I filled it up with kisses.”

The parents felt guilty about how they had reacted. Dropping to their knees, they hugged their daughter tight and apologised for their mean spiritedness and angry words.

Time moves fast and soon enough the little girl had grown up and moved away from home. The parents kept the little gold box close by for the rest of their lives. Whenever they faced difficult times or life grew hard, they would take one of their daughter’s kisses from the box and remember the love and affection of the special little girl who had put it there.

(Adapted from Fred Burks “The Golden Wrapping Paper”: Berk, F, The Golden Wrapping Paper, <https://www.wanttoknow.info/goldwrappingpaper> Web of Love accessed: 28 November 2016)

Activity

Provide each child with a box to make or decorate. Some children may want to make a gold box like the box in the story whilst others will be happy to decorate their boxes more creatively. This may be worth considering when sourcing your supplies. Before the children begin making/decorating their boxes, tell them that the box is to be a Christmas gift for someone that they care about and ask them to choose who they will be giving it to. Help the children to make/decorate their boxes. Once the box is finished, it is time to fill it. Tell the group, that if they like they can fill their box with kisses like the little girl in the story, or they might like to fill it with love, laughter, friendship, kind words, or happiness. They might like to write a note to put in the box, or a message on the inside. Once the box is filled, get/help the children to write the name of the person they are giving their box to on a gift tag, and tape its string to the inside of the box lid.

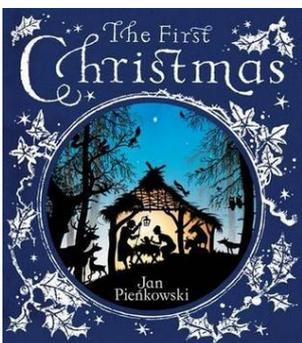


‘In a very real sense, each of us has been given an invisible golden box filled with unconditional love and kisses from our children, family, friends and God. There is no more precious possession anyone could hold’.

Burk. The Golden Wrapping Paper

Further reading

The following books carry on the message of simplicity and generosity:



The First Christmas – Jan Pienkowski

A Very Special Gift (Magical Christmas Treasury) – Jan Astley, Gaby Goldsack, and Kath Jewitt

The Quiltmakers Gift – Jeff Brumbeau

The Smartest Giant in Town – Julia Donaldson

The Giving Tree – Shel Silverstein

Qf&p. 1.02.1 Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as leadings of God whose light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life.

Qf&p 1.02.7 Be aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life. Spiritual learning continues throughout life, and often in unexpected ways. There is Inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Are you open to new light from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?

This Topical Activity was written by Katy Jones and edited by Mel Cook and Howard Nurden